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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 DOHA 001744

SIPDIS

NEA/ARPI FOR STHORNE

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SUBJECT: QATAR: AMBASSADOR UNTERMAYER'S 14 OCTOBER 2005  
MEETING WITH FOREIGN MINISTER HAMAD BIN JASSIM AL-THANI.

Classified By: Ambassador Chase Untermeyer for reasons  
1.4 (A) and (B)

1. (U) The Ambassador met with Qatar's First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim al-Thani (HBJ) at Wajbah Palace during the evening of Friday, 14 October.

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Iraq Referendum  
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2. (S) HBJ said he had been called the day before by Vice President Cheney, who asked him to use his influence with Harith al-Dari, head of the Muslim Ulema Council of Iraq, to curb violence during the referendum and to support the political process. HBJ said he wants to bring al-Dari's son to Doha sometime during Ramadan. (The father, he said, would not come, probably "for security reasons".) The younger al-Dari has already been to Doha two or three times and "can deliver". But HBJ said it was important for Amb Khalilzad to be in Doha at the same time, as (he said) the VP had offered. The two would not have to meet face-to-face. HBJ said: "We can pressure them (MUC), but I have to give them some hope the Americans are ready to listen." He said their dialogue, whether in-person or through him, should have "no conditions".

3. (C) Ambassador asked HBJ to make a statement supporting the referendum and urging Sunni participation. Time was late, Ambassador noted, but suggested that the GOQ could get something on Al Jazeera in time for many Iraqis to hear it before the polls closed. HBJ replied that "I do statements at airports and when we do other things," then turned to ask his assistant to give him a plan for a more immediate statement. In any event, HBJ promised a statement after the referendum.

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Al-Jazeera  
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4. (C) In his meeting with Sec Rice, HBJ pledged to work with the Ambassador on the "one or two" major problems the USG still has with Al Jazeera. Last night he reminded the Ambassador of this, saying, "I need to know what remains." Ambassador replied that these would be the two issues raised every month by the FBIS and DIA monitors: The use of insurgent-provided videos and of anti-American interviewees. Ambassador informed HBJ that an interagency working group on Al Jazeera is developing a response that will be provided to him soon.

5. (C) The Ambassador informed HBJ that the latest DIA monitoring report showed an increase in negative comment for the first time since our bilateral engagement on AJ began in February. (Hostile reportage rose from an low of 7% in August to 11% in September.) This backsliding, Ambassador pointed out, will be noted negatively in Washington. The Ambassador offered to provide a copy of the report so he (and Al Jazeera) can see what produced the worsened rating. Perhaps to show that he is sensitive to anti-American content, HBJ noted that after Liz Cheney complained to Amb al-Khalifa about a particularly virulent essay on AJ's website, he had it removed.

6. (C) HBJ then voluntarily said that Karen Hughes needs to have a better interview on AJ than the one she had while in Cairo. The interviewer that day, he said, "asked the wrong questions." He offered her another opportunity to go on the air but this time to be interviewed by "the right people". He said, "It is important that we know what she wants so we can have the right result."

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Embassy Comment  
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7. (C) HBJ characterized his 23 September meeting in Washington with Sec Rice as "not bad, not excellent". He hopes to see the Secretary at the Forum for the Future in Bahrain in November and would like her to visit Qatar while in the area. (Note: Sec Rice spent a night in Doha on her return from Iraq in mid-May, at which time she called Heir Apparent Sheikh Tamim and promised she would come back for a

formal visit sometime.) Starting with his meeting with SecState, HBJ has shown an enhanced desire to remove Al Jazeera as the principal blockage in bilateral relations. We should therefore produce the non-paper on further changes at the channel right away to take advantage of this apparent earnestness. We should also notify Karen Hughes of his offer for her to return to the Al Jazeera airwaves and to notify Sec Rice's staff of the invitation (which I support) for her to come to Qatar.

UNTERMEYER